

THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

03-64

Dear Reader

In this issue, after our Old Testament introduction to *attitudes*, we will look at some of the attitudes of people, good and bad, found in the Gospels. At best, we can only touch on a few of the many illustrations. The Lord's compassion for people is such a strong theme throughout that we will only mention it here and give a few illustrations. Compassion is a wonderful, Christlike attitude! Prayerfully and objectively look at yourself as you consider the following examples. Please look up the verses.

Matthew

Notice **Joseph** in Matthew 1:19. He thought Mary had been unfaithful in their engagement. But instead of desiring to hurt her or make her a public spectacle, he was prepared to quietly break the engagement (being a righteous man), even though it must have hurt him deeply. How happy he must have been to find out Mary was God's unique vessel (v.20). What a great attitude he displayed when the sinful nature would lash out at one who we thought hurt us.

Notice in Matthew 4:1-11 how the Lord met extreme difficulty from an extremely evil being – Satan. Instead of angrily telling him off, He simply brought Scripture to bear on each situation and held His ground. What a good attitude in **handling difficult matters**! We can learn much from this account in handling difficulties in the family and assembly. "What would Jesus do?" is a good guide in adjusting our reaction and attitude towards such situations and the often-difficult people involved.

The so-called "**Beatitudes**" of Matthew 5:3-10 help define good Christian attitudes! A Christian attitude never exudes superiority; it mourns on account of sin and failure to truly love God; it hungers and thirsts for righteousness (that which is right before God); it is merciful instead of vengeful; it desires that which is pure; it desires peace as much as possible; it doesn't despise persecution for righteousness' sake. God says those with such attitudes are truly blessed. Can He say that about our attitudes?

While there may well be a righteous anger against sin, we too often are easily or "**lightly angry**" (JND) with our brother or sister in the Lord and thus are in danger of God's governmental judgment (Mt.5:22). Contempt of our brethren (even if we don't agree with them) is unacceptable. God counts it along the lines of murder! Yet, are we not sometimes angry or contemptuous of another simply because of personalities or minor disagreements? We too of-

ten desire to give back an "eye for an eye" (vv.38-48) instead of acting in Christlike self-abasement. Isn't this an area where we really need to consider our attitudes?

A Christlike attitude is a **forgiving** attitude (Mt.6:14-15). But my experience is that Christians, even those who have a great amount of truth, often are very unforgiving and hold grudges. What a terrible attitude! We may not realize how much we are administratively not forgiven because of our unforgiving attitudes, and the sad results in our lives in loss of joy and even health. Yet we are quick to find lack of forgiveness with others, but so terribly blind to our faults which so displease our Head. See also Mark 11:24-26. God is a forgiving God, so our forgiving spirit is beautiful in His sight. Our motive for forgiving is Christ!

The attitude of **worry** is so prevalent that we don't see it as a bad attitude since it hurts the worrier more than others. But Matthew 6:25-34 gently reminds us that worry is lack of faith (v.30). Instead of worrying, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and God will take care of the things that are beyond our control. A worrying attitude interferes with our priority to put God and His things first. Yet there are very few of us who don't waste time and energy and even health in useless worry. See Luke 12:22-26.

Matthew 7:1-5 tells us not to have a **judgmental attitude**. We find in the epistles that we must judge unscriptural doctrine and walk, but we too often judge *motives* (and are often very inaccurate in our judgment) and scripturally undefined matters that don't match our opinion. Some of us become so critical that people avoid us, yet we can't see that our own unchristlike judgmental attitude is the reason.

The story of Christ healing Peter's mother-in-law (Mt.8:14-15) illustrates the attitude of **service and hospitality**. These things require a mind-set, an attitude of wanting to be helpful to others. Do we have that good attitude? We'll see this more in future issues. The other side of the coin is seen in Matthew 22:5 where people made light of an invitation. Although this is only the surface truth of this parable, it still is truth, and illustrates a bad attitude. Hospitable people go to lots of work and it is a terrible slap in their face when the invited find easy excuses not to come. It shows the attitude of **not caring for the feelings of others**.

When someone has made up his or her mind to **dislike** someone, even the most ridiculous charges will be made against that person. This type of really a satanically-based attitude is illustrated in Matthew 9:34 by the Pharisees who couldn't deny Jesus' miracle of casting out a demon, but in

hatred and unbelief attributed it to the power of the ruler of demons. I've seen such attitudes displayed against other Christians. Don't allow it to be *your* attitude! Then there are those who outwardly act like one's best friend (Mt.15:8), but there is hatred in their heart.

Notice the **self-centeredness** of the disciples in Matthew 19:13-14. Mirroring their own selfish attitudes, they thought the Lord too busy, too important to be bothered by children. But the Lord rebuked them and invited the children to come to Him. What is our **attitude towards children** – our own or others? Do we make friends with them or drive them or their parents away? Do we make time for them? It has been said there would not be so many juvenile delinquents if there were not so many parental delinquents! Do we seek them out to teach them the gospel and God's plan for their lives, and show them the love of God? Our attitudes regarding children and young people can have either a warming or a chilling effect on every home and every assembly. We see from these verses what Jesus did and would have us do. See also Mark 9:33-37; 10:13-16.

Complaining is the sign of a bad attitude. The example in Matthew 20:11 shows the cause to be, "I don't think I got what I deserved in comparison to someone else." Even in the world, people avoid a chronic complainer whose self-centeredness soon becomes evident. Many Christians have become complainers. Everything is wrong. Things aren't done the way *I* think they should be done, so those things should change because *I* know I'm right. But I don't realize how I'm perceived by others. This non-Christlike attitude has caused untold harm among the Lord's people.

This same thing is again seen even more intensely in verses 24-28. The ones whom the Lord calls great are the servants of the saints, just as the *Lord of All* came to serve, not be served. Yet the tendency is, the greater or more spiritual or more knowledgeable I think I am, the more I want to be **the leader, not a servant**. I think of myself as the "spiritual man" who has the right answers to all situations, the one to be looked up to, to be obeyed. I want to "correct" every situation to my superior way of thinking and much prefer to talk to those on my level, not the inferior average Christian (regardless of gift) who I know doesn't agree with me. Yet this terrible attitude which causes problems wherever found, is too often found among Christians. Much of the clergy-class is based on such wrong thinking.

Notice the many bad attitudes of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:3-7. Ponder carefully if anything like the illustrations given could in any way be attributed to you.

Mark

One of the touching stories of people with a good attitude is found in Mark 2:1-5 and Luke 5:17-26. An ill man had friends who cared for him enough that they took him to the

roof of a house, opened up the tile roof, and let him down so he would be right in front of the Lord, despite the huge crowd in and around the entrance. Those are the kind of friends I want! They had **true love** and compassion, and belief in the power of the Lord. They would do whatever needed to be done, regardless of the effort involved. It was surely a Christlike attitude ... and the man was healed.

As usual we again see the bad attitude of the scribes and Pharisees in Mark 2:16-17. Maintaining **outward appearance** of keeping away from sinners was more important to them than the spiritual needs of people. What is our attitude when meeting those of a perceived "lower" social class, the poor, those of other races or languages, those living differently? The Lord didn't condone the sin of those He ate with, but used the occasion to "call sinners to repentance." Many of the Corinthian brethren had terrible lifestyles before their salvation (1 Cor.6:9-11). Yet Paul and others brought them the gospel. See also Luke 7:39.

In Mark 3:2-5 we see another bad attitude. People heard and watched the Lord, not to learn the truth, but to find some means to accuse Him. This is one of the few times we read of the Lord being angry. These unsaved people displayed a terrible attitude of **unreasoning dislike**. Yet *Christians* seem all-to-easily to dislike another Christian, displaying an ungodly attitude of dislike and thus seeking an occasion to find fault with the person they dislike. If the Lord was angry then, how angry He must be with those of His own who display the same bad attitude! We can't lose our salvation, but we can lose our health, happiness and reward! See also Mark 7:2; 12:13-15 and Luke 20:19-26. We note we may dislike what someone says or does, but not the person himself or herself (Jn.13:34-35).

The Lord displayed unusual behavior in Mark 11:15-17 and John 2:15-16. He drove the moneychangers out of the temple and overturned their tables! We might interpret this as a bad attitude, but we know such is not true when it comes to the Lord. These people were desecrating "My Father's house." Such blatant ungodliness couldn't be tolerated. There will be times when we have to display a forceful attitude and **refuse to compromise God's Word**. But when we do, *we need to be sure our only motive is to stand for God*. I knew an older brother who would often give a public correction, but never made anyone angry, because it was well known that he truly loved all the saints of God and only wanted their best. The next verse again shows the hateful attitude of the scribes and Pharisees.

The story of the widow's "two mites" (Mk.12:41-44; Lk.21:1-4) illustrates the Christlike attitude of love of God in **giving**. She gave all she had: she could have given only one mite and no one would have faulted her. But this poor woman had such faith, such love for God, that she gave all

and simply trusted God. This attitude of love and trust has been recorded for our admonition!

Peter showed a **fleshly attitude** (Mk.14:71; Lk.22:57-61; Jn.18:17-18, 25-27). First, he boasted that he would never forsake the Lord (Mk.14:29; Lk.22:33), but then denied Him three times, even with cursing and swearing! See also Mark 14:50. I'm often amazed at the "big pronouncements" (as I call them) that Christians make regarding spiritual things, yet fail in their own lives to carry them out! Peter had to learn the hard way that there is nothing for God in his sinful nature. Thankfully, his attitude changed from fleshly self-confidence to the dependent man who would give his life for his Lord. How about us?

Pilate showed the bad attitude of **wanting to please the crowd**, to be popular (Mk.15:15; Jn.19:12). There is much compromise with God's Word because of this same bad attitude. Are we willing to compromise God to be popular?

Luke

Think of the lovely **attitude of Mary**, probably a teen age girl, who suddenly found herself pregnant – a dramatic change in her life which she didn't ask for or expect. But when she found out she was part of God's plan, she submitted most graciously and willingly (Lk.1:38, 41-44). She was prepared to be used by God as He saw fit. Are we equally prepared? What is our attitude in serving Him when it means changes in our lives? Do we compromise the Lord's will for us in order to pursue earthly gain?

The Lord was 12 years old. He had made plain His higher calling of His Father's business. Yet part of God's plan was His "normal" growing up process. As a child, He was "obedient" or "subject" to His parents (Lk.2:51). Young people today often have a rebellious attitude when it comes to parents and the Lord's things. The Lord had an **obedient attitude** – a divine example for all Christian youth.

The Lord's good attitude was reflected in His "gracious words" (Lk.4:22). As in our opening verse of this study from Proverbs 23:7 in the previous *Messenger*, such words reflect a gracious heart – an **attitude of love and grace**.

Luke 8:19-21 record the Lord's **attitude towards family**. He cared much for His mother, but He didn't allow family to interfere with God's work. So often with us, we older ones allow what our children do to influence what we do, even to giving up truth. See Matthew 10:37. Children are also responsible to the Lord to do what is right before Him.

Luke 10:29-37 records the account of the so-called "Good Samaritan." The **uncompassionate attitude** of some compared to the compassionate attitude of the Good Samaritan (our Lord) is contrasted. The fact the man in need was not

prominent or wealthy made no difference to our Lord. Let's make sure it makes no difference with us!

The verses following (38-42) relate the famous story of Mary and Martha. Martha was full of poor attitudes. She "was distracted with much serving" (v.40). We've spoken of the good matter of hospitality, but with her, serving food had become more than was necessary. She became upset that Mary was listening to Jesus instead of helping her. She had a **complaining attitude**. The Lord's rebuke was very gentle, but Mary's attitude of giving the Lord her first priority was praised and called "that good part" (v.42). I fear we too often are prone to have Martha's attitude.

In one verse (Lk.12:15) the Lord rebukes a **greedy or covetous attitude**.

Nowhere is the attitude of love and compassion more plain than in the story of the "prodigal son" (Lk.15:11-32). This younger son did everything wrong, despising a loving household to go out into a sinful lifestyle. He was of age: the father couldn't stop him. But the father's **attitude of unconditional love** for the son never ceased. The son was not rejected by the father. In fact, the father constantly watched for him and as he later was returning, lavished him with love (v.20). The older son, however, had a **selfish attitude** and despised his brother, thinking only of himself. Is our attitude towards those of our physical or spiritual family who do things (sinful or not) that we disagree with, like that of the father or the older son?

The need for a **forgiving attitude** is seen clearly in Luke 17:4. One who sins against us even seven times a day and repents seven times, is to be forgiven. This can only happen when our attitudes are shaped by the divine nature and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Who are we allowing to be in control of our attitudes? Satan or God?

Those who are very active in the Lord's things, doing what they should be doing, can have the **wrong attitude as to their importance**. But, none of us can rightly say more than, "We are unprofitable servants" (Lk.17:10).

The story of the ten lepers (Lk.17:12-19) illustrates wonderfully how the Lord feels about an **attitude of thankfulness**. Only one of ten healed lepers returned to thank the Lord. Maybe this illustrates how rare a truly thankful attitude is among believers. How often do we thank the Lord for all He has done for us? How often do we thank our brothers and sisters for the many good things they do for us – things we may take for granted, but which have profited us spiritually and in the family of God? My experience is that it doesn't happen very often today. We prefer to have a critical attitude instead of a thankful one. How sad!

The story of the tax collector and the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14 illustrate the difference between a **boastful, self-important attitude and a humble, dependent attitude**. The account is self-explanatory.

The danger of a **materialistic attitude** is recorded for us in Luke 18:18-23. What is our attitude as to materialistic possessions? What prominence do they have in our lives? How much of a hindrance are those possessions to our dedicated service to our Lord? Important questions!

The most remarkable example of a **forgiving attitude** was displayed by our Lord in Luke 23:34. While suffering on the cross at the hands of cruel men, He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Who then have *we* not forgiven, and why not?

John

In John 3:30 John the Baptist shows an attitude of **humbleness and submission**. John had for a brief time a remarkable and successful, if not unusual career as the Lord's forerunner. But then Jesus came on the scene. There was no rivalry. John simply said, "He must increase but I must decrease." How about us? Are we content to be insignificant that Christ may be all in all?

The Jews had no dealings with Samaritans (Jn.4:9), but the Lord did, as illustrated in this chapter. Do we have a **racial or ethnic attitude** that keeps us from dealing with the souls of certain people? If so, we need to be more like our Lord who had come to bless *mankind*, not a certain race.

A blind man had been healed (Jn.9). His parents lied about him (vv.20-22) because they were **fearful of losing their status** in the Jewish synagogue. A really bad attitude! This is again seen in chapter 12:42-43. The praise of men was more important than the praise of God. Again, a really bad attitude!

Judas is an example of a person with a **greedy attitude** (Jn.12:6). His main interest was money. His greedy attitude eventually led him to betray the Lord and it cost him his life ... and gave him hell for eternity.

The Lord's **humble and loving attitude of service** is seen in John 13:1-17 in stooping to wash His disciples' feet. There are attitudes within attitudes in this account. We'll leave it for you to meditate on them.

"By this all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another" (Jn.13:34-35). Our basic, underlying attitude in all our dealings with all Christians should be **genuine love**. Yes, love to God (1 Jn.5:1-2) may require that I walk in separation from Christians who won't walk the scriptural pathway, but I should still love them as much

as I do those with whom I fellowship. Failure in this genuine love is undoubtedly the greatest failure among Christians. It may well be that Christians with less truth than others, but who have greater love, will receive a greater reward, for truth without love is nothing (1 Cor.13:1-3).

A combination of really bad attitudes is seen in John 18-19 regarding Jesus' mock trial. "They" – Jesus' accusers -- didn't mind lying to get Jesus executed, but they would not enter the governor's headquarters lest they be ceremonially defiled and couldn't eat the Passover (18:28). Then follows the account of Pilate. He knew the truth as to Jesus' guilt, but wanted the favor of man which ended with him condemning the innocent Jesus. These accounts must be called a **perverted attitude**. Christians are not immune from acting in such ways! Don't have a perverted, lying attitude!

The apostle John's **love-in-action attitude**, even when inconvenienced, is seen in John 19:27 when he took the Lord's mother, Mary, into his own house to care for her.

Joseph of Arimathea finally showed the good **stand up and be counted attitude**. He had been a secret disciple, but in John 19:38 stood openly for the Lord. So did Nicodemus (v.39). Are we ones who will stand up and be counted for our Lord? Will we do things simply out of love and obedience, regardless of what other people might think of us? Will both men and women recognize and obey Christ's teachings on headship and the outward signs of headship (1 Cor.11, etc)?

Mary's attitude of **real affection** for her Lord is beautifully seen in the account of her at the tomb, and is contrasted to the apparently less affection of the disciples (Jn.20:10-11). How much affection for Him do we display in what we say and do?

Finally, the **attitude of "what about?"** is seen in Peter's question to the Lord about John (Jn.21:22). The Lord said basically, "What I do with anyone else, or what he or she does or does not do, is not your concern: you follow Me." Are we failing to follow the Lord because our eyes are on the wrong person? RPD

Concluding Remarks

We trust this study will prove valuable that we may be found more pleasing to our Lord and that assemblies will grow more together and be able to better serve the Lord. The next issue, the Lord willing, will continue our study beginning in Acts and continuing in the epistles. Remember our www.assemblymessenger.com website. Our preferred mailing address is Dearborn Heights assembly, 24570 Ann Arbor Trail, Dearborn Heights MI 48127.